

(approved November 9, 2001)

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
FULL BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

JULY 26, 2001

**EMBASSY SUITES
7762 BEACH BLVD
BUENA PARK, CA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Selma Fields, MFT Member, Board Chair
Karen Pines, MFT Member, Vice Chair
Virginia Laurence, LCSW Member
Roberto Quiroz, Public Member
Howard Stein, Public Member

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Burdick, LEP Member
Christina Chen, Public Member

STAFF PRESENT

Sherry Mehl, Executive Officer
Denise Johnson, Assistant Executive Officer
Julie McAuliffe, Administrative Analyst

GUEST LIST ON FILE

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Ms. McAuliffe called the role and a quorum was not established.

**1. PRESENTATION BY THE OFFICE OF EXAMINATION RESOURCES ON THE
BOARD'S ORAL EXAMINATION**

Ms. Mehl stated that the Board had previously asked staff to research alternative ways of testing people in ways other than an oral examination. At the time, the Board's oral examination was under scrutiny by the Legislature and several issues arose out of this scrutiny. The Board was successful in sustaining the oral examination as a requirement for licensure. The issues that arose from the legislation still exist and include fairness of the examination, subjectivity, and validity. At the time the legislation was introduced to eliminate our oral examinations, the Board of Psychology (BOP) began to review their oral examination and have held hearings around the state to solicit public comments on the possibility of eliminating their oral examination as a

condition for licensure. It appears that BOP will be adopting regulations to eliminate their oral examination and replace it with a California jurisprudence examination. Dr. Hertz's presentation to the Board was to be an overview of his findings of reviewing oral examinations in general and sharing the issues that need to be addressed by the Board. The decision from the BOP to do away with their oral examination puts a certain amount of pressure on our Board to look further at this possibility.

Dr. Norman Hertz, Chief of the Office of Examination Resources (OER) with the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), provided the Board with an overview of the Board's oral examination process. He indicated that the purpose of the presentation was more of an exploratory presentation than to provide answers. His overview included psychometric considerations, status of the oral examinations, and proposal for change.

The first issue relates to the psychometric considerations. He indicated that a document published by the Psychological Association, American Education Research Association, and The National Council on Education provides the standards for all examinations administered in the United States. These standards apply to educational as well as licensure examinations. In addition, the Legislature passed a law that required DCA to develop Examination Validation Guidelines and, throughout the development of these guidelines, the standards developed by those mentioned above were used to develop standards for all licensing examination administered by the various board and bureaus within DCA. The psychometric consideration foundations indicate that all licensing examinations should be based on an occupational analysis, have standardized questions, have a behaviorally-anchored rating criteria, include examiner training, and have structured vignettes. Dr. Hertz stated that the marriage and family therapist oral examination is in the process of being re-validated. OER is in the process of conducting the occupational analysis. The occupational analysis defines the content of what should be tested in the written and oral examination. It identifies the tasks and the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary to perform those tasks. Standardized questions are necessary in order to administer an examination. The criteria for rating candidates responses is based on a behaviorally- anchored rating criteria, which is a method of defining standards for acceptable answers to a series of questions. There is a significant focus on examiner training that assists examiners in developing standards that are consistent. A great deal of effort goes into developing structured vignettes that contain the same amount of content and difficulty. Dr. Hertz stated that the only reason to have an oral examination is to complement the written examination. If something can be tested in a written format, it should be. An oral examination is supplemental to a written examination. It assesses competencies that cannot be tested in a written format and involves different subject matter than those covered in academics and supervision.

Dr. Hertz then provided the Board with his thoughts on the users perspective of the oral examination. He indicated that there is a consistent pass/fail rate, there is widespread support for the oral examination, the oral examination adheres to high standards, and it assesses knowledge needed for actual practice.

Dr. Hertz then provided the Board with a psychometricians perspective of the oral examination. He indicated that it is questionable as to whether the oral examination is still a state-of-the-art instrument. There have been numerous changes in testing technology since the use of an oral examination was implemented. The educational and supervision requirements were very different at the time of implementation. He felt that the oral examination has been taken to its highest level and from a psychometricians point of view, he questioned if the candidates decisions are still reliable. He stated statistics have been provided that identify the inner rater reliability and those seem to remain consistent. The form of reliability that is not known is the comparison with two other examiners, and then another two examiners. He questioned if the results would be consistent among those pairs of examiners. The replicability of decisions by examiners who are consistently harder than others and those that are softer than others is another area of concern. He then stated that he continues to question the continued use of an oral examination. He indicated that the information he had presented to the Board thus far has described the process, which meets the requirements for reliability and is legally defensible and psychometrically sound.

He then stated that there are questions about our oral examination that need to be examined. He thought that it was time to move forward and that OER and the Board have done all that can be done with an oral examination.

Dr. Hertz stated that, from his perspective, there are misuses of the oral examination. These misuses include the examiners use of the oral examination as a holistic, or fitness, evaluation of a candidate, a hiring interview for employment purposes, and a predictor of success without sufficient data. He also indicated that each element of the oral examination has some noise. He stated these elements include development, the questions, the criteria for rating a candidate's response, the vignette, and the examiners. The cumulative effect of these produces a lot of noise, but this is the nature of developing an assessment tool that is very complex.

He then provided the Board with a proposal to replace the oral examination with clinical simulations. This would satisfy the need for a supplemental examination to assess subject matter not tested in the written examination. The characteristics of the proposed simulation would be a vignette based written examination with content similar to the oral examination. The questions would be the same or similar to the oral examination questions and include five multiple choice answers. It would be computer based and would require the candidate to integrate material. He then indicated that if the Board agreed with his proposal, there would be an opportunity to run pilot tests prior to the implementation.

In closing, Dr. Hertz stated that he sees the future as continuing to operate from the premise that the examination programs can be improved, continue to use technology to enhance the quality of licensing decisions, and continue to seek further alignment of education, supervision and the examination. He then stated that the administration of the examination is one of the most problematic issues that faces the Board and requires a tremendous amount of resources.

2. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF EXAMINATION PRESENTATION ON THE BOARD'S ORAL EXAMINATION

Ms. Fields stated that the Board has always been committed to working on the examination and will continue to research ways of improving the examination for the benefit of the candidate and the consumer.

Mr. Quiroz questioned the portion of the proposal regarding a vignette based examination. Dr. Hertz explained that currently a vignette is developed and, within that development, the responses to that vignette are developed. Currently we ask candidates what they need to know and Dr. Hertz stated that the proposed simulation would also identify what a candidate need not know. By developing a multiple choice examination, you can include answers that seem correct which would greater assess a candidates level of competency.

Ms. Mehl explained that the current examination allows a candidate to provide a list of several diagnosis and treatment options that may hit on the appropriate ones that apply to their vignette and they are then given a passing score in that content area. The proposed simulation would take all questionable subjectivity out of the examination. It would truly be a knowledge-based examination. She then indicated that an asset to computer based testing is that a candidate can refer back to their vignette and responses.

Ms. Fields suggested that the Board may want to pilot test this proposal. Dr. Hertz explained that the vignette-based examination would be placed on the computer at the end of the written examination. He indicated that the testing of this proposal could begin in January if the Board wished.

Dr. Stein stated that he questioned the use of multiple choice. He thought that guessing the correct answer was easier in a multiple-choice examination. He suggested that we may add an essay portion to the exam to determine someone's thought process in relation to the vignette. He also questioned if the Board would be losing something of significance by eliminating the oral examination. Dr. Hertz responded by stating that the Board, as well as the education and supervision requirements, were very different when the oral examination was initially implemented. The Board as well as the other factors are in a very different place now the oral examination is as advanced as it is going to be and it is time to move on and alleviate some of the problems the Board is having with the oral examination.

Ms. Fields stated that there are now big differences in supervision standards and a tremendous continuing effort in a more equal expectation in education. There are also big differences and a greater sophistication in how examinations are administered.

Dr. Stein again expressed his concerns about whether the Board was willing to give up the oral examination.

Ms. Pines asked if the Board was willing to give up whatever we have in the oral examination process. She questioned what are the qualities of a face-to-face examination that cannot be obtained in a multiple-choice examination.

Dr. Hertz responded by stating that it is rather intangible as far of grasping what the Board would give up. He stated in response to Dr. Stein's comment about the ease of guessing on the multiple-choice examination, the examination would be designed so that a person could not guess the correct answer, they would have to know. The examination would also require a candidate to integrate their responses throughout the multiple-choice questions. The only thing that changes from one examination to the next is the vignette, so someone would not benefit from knowing the questions because each vignette is different. He thought that an appropriate assessment could be done through the written vignette and multiple choice testing process. Dr. Hertz stated that implementing the testing pilot project would provide the Board with answers to the many questions they have.

Dr. Stein and Ms. Pines questioned about the use of virtual testing. Ms. Mehl stated that it would be extremely difficult to do. She then indicated that just having the Board members thinking beyond the oral examination was very exciting.

Ms. Mehl stated that there is a national study regarding multiple-choice examinations that may be helpful to the Board. This study indicates that multiple choice in the most efficient way to test for accuracy and can cover much more content than other methods of testing.

Ms. Fields asked that this proposal be included on the next meeting agenda as an action item for vote from the whole Board.

Ms. Pines asked if our examination was different than the BOP examination. Dr. Hertz stated that our oral examination is further developed than theirs but has the same problems. Ms. Pines then asked if other states offer a multiple-choice examination in replacement of an oral examination. He did not know but thought that California had the leading edge on examination development. Ms. Pines asked if Board staff or OER could research other state boards that regulate behavioral science to determine if they offer multiple-choice examinations. Ms. Mehl explained that California is the only state that requires an oral examination. Other states participate in a national written examination.

Ms. Pines asked if the proposal included something similar to the BOP pending requirement of a jurisprudence examination. Dr. Hertz explained that BOP participates in a national examination and this examination does not include California's specific laws and ethical standards.

Dr. Stein questioned if there are issues that need to be defined and resolved if we remove the oral examination in order to have a more complete examination. Dr. Hertz stated that OER and the Board are searching for an examination that tests the needed knowledge base, is not subjective, and better measures a person's competency.

Ms. Mehl stated another negative to the oral examination is the time lapse between the written and the oral examinations, which is a barrier to the profession. If we were able to test a candidate on all of the necessary skill sets at one time, this would benefit the candidate and ultimately the consumer.

Ms. Fields again asked the Board to think about this further and discuss this again at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 2:10 p.m.